

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9086
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA POUCH
AMCONSUL CALI POUCH
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN POUCH

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ELAB, EEW, BEXP, CO
SUBJ: POLITICAL SUMMARIES: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. OUTGOING PRESIDENT LOPEZ DEFENDED SELF, FAMILY AND ADMINISTRATION, ATTACKED OPPONENTS AND PRAISED HIS OWN POLICIES, ESPECIALLY CONCERNING PANAMA, DURING HIS FAREWELL ADDRESS AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEW CONGRESS. IN RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT-ELECT TURBAY'S EXPRESSED DESIRES, HIS LIBERAL FOLLOWERS HAVE SEEN TO IT THAT BOTH FACTIONS OF BOTH THE LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE PARTIES ARE REPRESENTED EQUITABLY IN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NEW CONGRESS, PERHAPS BURYING THE HATCHET WITH THE MINORITY "PASTRANISTA" FACTION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY WHICH HAS BITTERLY OPPOSED PRESIDENT LOPEZ. FINAL ELECTORAL RESULTS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED. US EXHIBITORS ARE SELLING WELL AT XII INTERNATIONAL BOGOTA FAIR. COLOMBIA'S TRADE WITH SOVIET BLOC HAS DECLINED DURING LAST TEN YEARS. STRIKE CLOSED MOST COURTS FOR A DAY.

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GUERRILLA AND OTHER RURAL VIOLENCE HAS RECENTLY INCREASED. END SUMMARY.

2. LOPEZ OPENS CONGRESS WITH HIS FAREWELL ADDRESS. ON JULY 20, COLOMBIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY, ALFONSO LOPEZ MICHELSEN MADE HIS FINAL ADDRESS AS PRESIDENT TO THE INAUGURAL SESSIONS OF EACH OF THE TWO HOUSES OF CONGRESS. THE NEARLY TWO-HOUR SPEECH GIVEN FIRST

TO THE SENATE AND THEN TO THE CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES
CONSTITUTED A BALANCE SHEET OF HIS FOUR-YEAR ADMINISTRATION.
LOPEZ, A LIBERAL, DEVOTED MUCH OF HIS ADDRESS TO A PERSONAL
DEFENSE OF HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY FROM VARIOUS ACCUSATIONS, AND TO
COUNTER-ACCUSATIONS AGAINST HIS CRITICS, INCLUDING FORMER
PRESIDENTS OSPINA AND PASTRANA, BOTH CONSERVATIVES, AND THEIR
FAMILIES. HE ATTACKED THE SUPREME COURT FOR DECLARING UNCONSTITUTIONAL
LEGISLATION HE HAD INSPIRED CALLING FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL
CONVENTION. HE URGED THE CONGRESS TO ENACT THE JUDICIAL REFORMS
HE WOULD HAVE SUBMITTED TO THAT CONVENTION, AND ADVOCATED A
PLEBISCITE SHOULD THE SUPREME COURT IN TURN DECLARE SUCH
LEGISLATION UNCONSTITUTIONAL. HE PROMISED, AND URGED HIS FOLLOWERS,
TO REFRAIN FROM INTERFERING WITH THE TURBAY ADMINISTRATION SOON
TO BE INAUGURATED. HE WARNED OF THE GROWING "NON-ELECTORAL" THREAT
OF THE EXTREMIST GROUPS WHO FARED SO POORLY IN THE RECENT
ELECTIONS. HE PRAISED HIMSELF AND HIS ADMINISTRATION FOR CEASING
TO OBSTRUCT US-PANAMA NEGOTIATIONS--WHICH HE SAID PREVIOUS
ADMINISTRATIONS HAD DONE BY INSISTING THAT THE US GUARANTEE
COLOMBIA'S RIGHTS UNDER THE URRUTIA-THOMSON TREATY. INSTEAD, HE
SAID, HE HAD SUPPORTED PANAMA'S RECOVERY OF THE CANAL ZONE,
COUNTING ON PANAMA TO AGREE FREELY WITH COLOMBIA, AS PANAMA HAS
NOW DONE, TO CONTINUE COLOMBIA'S SPECIAL CANAL PRIVILEGES.
LOPEZ ALSO TOOK CREDIT FOR BROADENING COLOMBIA'S DIPLOMATIC
RELATIONS AND CLAIMED THAT HE WOULD HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN
RESTRAINING INFLATION HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE COFFEE PRICE
"BONANZA" AND OTHER FACTORS BEYOND HIS CONTROL.
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3. COMPROMISE IN ELECTION OF CONGRESSIONAL OFFICERS. AFTER
LOPEZ' ADDRESS, THE TWO HOUSES OF CONGRESS ELECTED THEIR NEW
OFFICERS. IN A GESTURE PRESUMABLY DEMONSTRATING THE FUTURE
TURBAY ADMINISTRATION'S MORE EVEN-HANDED ATTITUDE TOWARD THE
TWO FACTIONS OF THE OPPOSITION CONSERVATIVE PARTY, AND REFLECTING
TURBAY'S EXPRESSED DESIRES, THE LIBERAL MAJORITY VOTED FOR,
AND THUS SECURED THE ELECTION, OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF ONE
CONSERVATIVE FACTION AS FIRST VICE PRESIDENT IN ONE HOUSE AND
THE OTHER FACTION IN THE OTHER HOUSE--THE MAJORITY "ALVARISTA"
FACTION IN THE SENATE AND THE MINORITY "OSPINA/PASTRANISTA"
FACTION IN THE CHAMBER--DESPITE THE OBJECTIONS OF "ALVARISTA"
LEADER ALVARO GOMEZ HURTADO THAT THE LIBERALS SHOULD RESPECT THE
DOMINANCE OF HIS OWN MAJORITY FACTION IN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY.
THE TURBAY MAJORITY FACTION ALSO CONCEDED THE SECOND VICE
PRESIDENCY IN BOTH HOUSES TO THE LIBERALS' MINORITY "LLERISTA"
FACTION. THE NEW SENATE OFFICERS ARE: PRESIDENT, GUILLERMO PLAZAS
ALCID; FIRST VICE PRESIDENT, JAIME PAVA NAVARRO; SECOND VICE
PRESIDENT, JOSE MANUEL VERGARA. THE CHAMBER'S NEW OFFICERS, IN
THE SAME ORDER, ARE JORGE MARIO EASTMAN, GUILLERMO OCAMPO
OSPINA AND ADALBERTO OVALLE MUNOZ. COMMENT: TURBAY'S EVEN-
HANDEDNESS MAY END THE BITTER FEUD BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND

"PASTRANISTAS" WHICH PERSISTED DURING THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION,
BUT COULD MAKE TURBAY'S RELATIONS MORE DIFFICULT WITH THE
"ALVARISTAS".

4. ELECTORAL COURT CONFIRMS TURBAY VICTORY. THE ELCTORAL COURT
ON JULY 16 OFFICIALLY DECLARED JULIO CESAR TURBAY PRESIDENT-ELECT
OF COLOMBIA (BOGOTA 6666). AT THE SAME TIME, THE COURT CONFIRMED
THE FINAL, OFFICIAL VOTE COUNT FOR THE JUNE 4 ELECTION AS FOLLOWS:

TURBAY (LIBERALS): 2,503,681

BETANCUR (CONSERVATIVES): 2,365,620

PERNIA (UNO-ANAPO-MIL -- INCLUDES MOSCOW-LINE COMMUNIST
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PARTY): 97,234

VALENCIA (MRN): 65,961

PIEDRAHITA (FUP --INCLUDES MAOISTS): 27,059

RAMIREZ (UNIOS -- TROTSKYITE): 6,643

TOTAL VOTES (MINOR CANDIDATES, BLANK AND NULL VOTES MAKE-70
THE DIFFERENCE): 5,074,489

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5. INTERNATIONAL FAIR OF BOGOTA OPENS. THE XII INTERNATIONAL FAIR OF BOGOTA OPENED TO THE PUBLIC JULY 15. THERE ARE 39 OTHER COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING BESIDES THE U.S. ATTENDANCE OVER THE FIRST WEEKEND WAS 150,000, EXCEEDING LAST YEAR'S FIGURE FOR THE SAME PERIOD BY 40 PERCENT. THERE ARE 95 EXHIBITORS AT THE U.S. PAVILION (TOTAL AREA: 5,255 SQUARE METERS). THEIR SALES FOR THE FIRST FOUR DAYS ARE ESTIMATED AT US \$500,000, INCLUDING ZR MOTOR LAUNCHES, 120 AMC JEEPS, ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT, TOOLS AND PLASTIC PROCESSING MACHINERY. U.S. PARTICIPANTS ARE EXTREMELY SATISFIED WITH THE RESULTS TO DATE.

6. COLOMBIAN TRADE WITH SOCIALISTS BLOC DECLINING. OPENING A SPECIAL SEMINAR ON TRADE WITH THE SOCIALIST BLOC HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE BOGOTA INTERNATIONAL FAIR, THE DIRECTOR OF THE COLOMBIAN FOREIGN TRADE INSTITUTE ANALYZED COLOMBIA'S TRADE RELATIONS WITH THE BLOC OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS. THE SOCIALIST BLOC'S SHARE IN COLOMBIAN TRADE DECLINED FROM 3.3
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PERCENT TO 2.7 PERCENT OVER THAT PERIOD. THE DIRECTOR NOTED THAT COLOMBIAN EXPORTS WERE STILL PREDOMINANTLY COFFEE AND THAT COLOMBIA CAN NOT FIND ENOUGH PRODUCTS TO BALANCE ITS TRADE ACCOUNT WITH THE BLOC. HE BLAMED THE SMALL AMOUNTS OF IMPORTS ON POOR QUALITY AND A LACK OF INFORMATION ABOUT BLOC FINANCING AND COMMERCIAL POSSIBILITIES.

7. ONE-DAY STRIKE CLOSES MOST COLOMBIAN COURTS. A ONE-DAY STRIKE JUNE 18 BY MOST OF THE 20,000-SOME OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES OF COLOMBIA'S JUDICIAL BRANCH SHUT DOWN MOST COURTS AND JUDICIAL OFFICES IN BOGOTA AND MOST OTHER COLOMBIAN CITIES, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, ALTHOUGH THE SUPREME COURT AND A FEW OTHER KEY NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTIONS FUNCTIONED NORMALLY. EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT JUDGE JAIME PARDO LEAL SAID THE STRIKE WAS NOT MEANT TO DISRUPT, BUT ONLY TO DEMONSTRATE COHESION AND INSIST ON IMMEDIATE PAYMENT OF OVERDUE SALARY INCREASES AND BONUSES. JUSTICE MINISTER CESAR GOMEZ ESTRADA HAD EARLIER COMPLAINED THAT THE JUDICIAL BRANCH, WHICH SHOULD SET AN EXAMPLE, WAS CALLING A SUBVERSIVE AND IRRESPONSIBLE STRIKE TO CREATE CHAOS AND CONFUSION. ON JUNE 18, HOWEVER, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE STRIKE WAS PEACEFUL AND NOT DISRUPTIVE. HE STILL TERMED IT SENSELESS BECAUSE THE RETROACTIVE INCREASES WERE ALREADY IN THE WORKS AND COULD NOT BE SPEEDED UP. THE GOVERNMENT REPORTEDLY

PROMISED THE INCREASES BY THE END OF THE MONTH. IF THEY ARE NOT PAID, A STRIKE OF INDEFINITE DURATION IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN JULY 30. NATIONAL LABOR LEADERS EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE STRIKE, WHICH SEEMED TO HAVE NO POLITICAL MOTIVATION.

8. INCREASE IN GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES AND OTHER VIOLENCE. ON JULY 17, THE POPULAR LIBERATION ARMY (EPL), GUERRILLA ARM OF THE PRO-CHINESE "MARXIST-LENINIST" COMMUNIST PARTY OF COLOMBIA, ATTACKED TWO MORE SMALL VILLAGES IN THE NORTHERN DEPARTMENT OF CORDOBA, NEAR WHERE THE SOVIETS PLAN TO CONSTRUCT A MAJOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HYDROELECTRIC COMPLEX. ON THE SAME DAY, 30 GUERRILLAS FROM THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA (FARC) GUERRILLA ARM OF THE PRO-MOSCOW COMMUNIST PARTY ATTACKED THE TWO OF LAS CLARAS IN THE SAME AREA. NOT TO BE OUTDONE, THE 19TH OF APRIL MOVEMENT (M-19) SEIZED A BUS IN MEDELLIN ON 17 JULY THAT WAS CARRYING NICARAGUAN BASEBALL TEAM PARTICIPATING IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN GAMES. THE PLAYERS WERE HARANGUED FOR HALF AN HOUR ON THE EVILS OF THE SOMOZA REGIME AND THEN RELEASED UNHARMED. AT LEAST EIGHT MORE DEATHS WERE RECORDED IN THE GUAJIRA REGION AS POLICE AND CRIMINAL ELEMENTS CLASHED DURING THE WEEK. FIVE COLOMBIANS WERE KILLED AND TWO U.S. CREW MEMBERS WERE SERIOUSLY INJURED JULY 19 WHEN A U.S. REGISTERED AIRCRAFT, APPARENTLY LANDING TO PICK UP A LOAD OF MARIJUANA, CRASHED INTO A HOUSE NEAR EL RETEN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MAGDALENA. THE FAMILY OF MIGUEL DE GERMAN RIBON, A PROMINENT BOGOTA BUSINESSMAN AND FORMER AMBASSADOR WHO WAS KIDNAPPED MARCH 25, REQUESTED THAT COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES NOT INTERFERE IN NEGOTIATIONS FOR RIBON'S RELEASE, AFTER AN ALLEGED M-19 MEMBER INVOLVED IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WAS ARRESTED JULY 14.
DREXLER

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